

By FLORA LEWIS

Special to The New York Times

PARIS, March 7 — A vast wiretapping operation was attributed to the French Government today by a national magazine.

According to the magazine, 1,500 Paris telephones are on permanent tap, and many others in both the capital and provincial cities are tapped at one or another government group's request.

The headquarters of the operation is in a series of former stables in the west wing of the Invalides, a former military hospital on the Left Bank that contains Napoleon's tomb.

The transcripts, however, are reportedly sent to many people, not only high Government officials but also to some opposition politicians and private citizens.

In addition to private phones, including those of embassies, the magazine said, the taps are placed on strategic public pay phones, such as those in cafes near important ministries, and on the private lines link Cabinet ministers and other officials.

The magazine that published the account is Le Nouvel Observateur, a widely read weekly with pro-Socialist sympathies. Its article was apparently provoked by an official, but private, complaint made to President Pompidou by Michel Poniatowski, Secretary-General of the Independent Republican party, whose leader is Finance Minister Valéry Giscard d'Estaing.

The Independent Republicans form part of the Gaullist-led Government coalition, and Mr. Giscard d'Estaing has been mentioned as a possible Premier in a post-election Government.

No Comment by Government

The Ministry of Interior declined all comment on the article, as did the rest of the Government. But the brewing storm it has created seems certain to burst when the new Parliament is convened after Sunday's runoff elections.

Mr. Poniatowski told the magazine, in answer to an inquiry based on reports of his enraged outburst at a private meeting of party leaders, that he had written Mr. Pompidou and would demand a parliamentary investigation of the illegal taps.

His sharp letter asked whether Mr. Pompidou considered it normal that "wiretaps are used for the surveillance of journalists, politicians and simple citizens, and what measures you plan to take to remedy such proceedings."

The magazine said the operation was under the direction of the G.I.C. (Interministerial Control Group) and that Pompi-

dou's were the military security groups of the three branches of the armed forces; the criminal police; the S.D.E.C. (the French C.I.A.); the D.S.T. (counter-espionage intelligence), and by the RG. (General Information Service), roughly equivalent to the F.B.I.

Le Nouvel Observateur said that each service, and especially the military and the civilians, worked separately so that the employees of each were not in a position to know what the others were doing.

The basis for the operation was left behind by the Gestapo, which during the occupation set up a central listening post that could tap any Paris phone. But the latest modern technology has been added, the magazine said, including a device that records the exact time of a conversation and all the numbers that have been dialed from a line under surveillance.

Jail Terms for Tapping

A law passed in July, 1970, provides for a \$400 to \$10,000 fine and a two-month to one-year jail sentence for illegal wire-tapping. Wire-tapping is legal only to protect the public order or state security. The signature of the Premier is required for each tap.

According to Mr. Poniatowski, however, "The area of taps continues to spread to sectors that have nothing to do with crime and which, on the contrary, have to do with politics and personal liberty. The taps, at this moment, are used on journalists, union leaders, Government officials and even ministers."

"Election candidates are tapped, and simple citizens, on the pretext of collecting information on public attitudes."

Le Nouvel Observateur said it was "notorious" that people with access to special favor could get taps placed on phones of their wives or girl friends, and that the intercepts were used by some politicians as an adjunct to public opinion polls.

"Who receives the reports?" Mr. Poniatowski asked. "Is it only the Premier of the interested minister?"

"No," he continued. "It is also the special assistants, the

heads of departments and so on."

The article apparently was also based on information disclosed by disgruntled former employees of the central tap headquarters, although it does not say so flatly, and the editor, Jean Daniel, chose not to answer a question on that point.

The article gives a description of the shabby work rooms with doors without handles, which are always kept locked, the working hours of the personnel, their methods and the atmosphere.

It quotes "those who have worked there" as saying that "the atmosphere is very bad."

"The military never lose a chance to remind us that we're in their house," the article said. "We are under constant surveillance, we are asked to take every precaution when it would take only a nailfile to open the cupboards where the records are kept."

"We are searched, but every evening after 7 P.M., the cleaning women are left alone in the work rooms. And then, we are ordered to listen to people for reasons that have nothing to do with public order or state security."

Mr. Daniel said a number of deputies, who were virtually assured of re-election had told him they planned to take it up with great vigor.

The general public, insensitized perhaps by both past scandals and the technical melodramatics made familiar in espionage thrillers and movies, has yet to show any visible reaction.

In addition to recorded and direct taps, the article describes an American-made device that can be implanted in any telephone.

French Weekly Accuses Government Of a Widespread Wiretap Operation

3/8/73

If you missed it, the extent to which a less wealthy government than ours has gone to collect and store information from illegal taps and bugs is in Flora Lewis' NYTimes piece of 3/8/73, reporting L'Observateur Nouvelle's expose. EN 3/9/73